

Storm Horse

by Jane Elson

TEACHER NOTES



BEFORE READING

- Undertake preliminary research on the 'Great Depression' in 1930s America to deepen understanding. Why do you think the author has used this time in history for the second narrative of the story?

WHILE READING

Language

- Keep a reading journal to record thoughts, ideas, viewpoints, author style/technique, literary devices, dialogue and examples of effective vocabulary.
- Collect and explore the meaning of unfamiliar words through the use of a dictionary.
- Collect and explore effective words and phrases used by the author to develop the setting, characters, plot, themes, mood, emotions and suspense.

Making Predictions

- Make regular predictions about what might happen next from the details stated and implied.

Beyond the Book

- Compare and contrast two characters, finding quotes to support your suggestions and ideas.
- Explore the same scene but from a different perspective – pick a scene from the book and re-write it from the perspective of one of the different characters. Would they see things differently? How would they feel? How would they react? Would they have the same opinions?
- Daniel experiences a range of emotions during his personal journey. Decide what emotions he displays at different points of the story and record an example of each.
- How do the letters written by Daniel's great-great-grandad connect with the story written in the present day?

What parallels can be drawn from the letters written by Daniel's great-great-grandad and the characters in the book? How does Cuthbert's experience during the 'Great Depression' help the characters in the book?

- Imagine you are the newspaper journalist who wrote one of the news articles at the end of the story. Pick one of the headlines listed on page 333 and write the article using your knowledge of the event.
 - London Kids Want Horse
 - Beckham Estate goes to the races
 - Red Pollard and Red Margate
 - Jammie Dodger and Seabiscuit: The Greatest Horses There Ever Were
 - Boy flummoxes PE teacher with alternative Dyslexic Thinking
- Sculpting Characters – pick the scene of the Big Race and the Big Read. Pupils recreate the scene and freeze to show the event. Other pupils to sculpt the characters to show emotions, reactions etc. Pay attention to gaze, tilt of the head, hands, position of the character.

Freeze Frame the action and use the drama technique of 'magic microphone' to interview the different characters depicted within the scene created.
- What questions would you ask the different characters in the book? Make a list and discuss the possible responses with a partner.
- Why is the 'Old Shed' important to Daniel and the other characters?

KEY THEMES, QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION POINTS

Theme: Celebrating Differences/Neurodiversity

- How does the author show what it is like to live with Dyslexia? Find example from the text to support your answer.
- ***'By the time I get to the end of the page I realise that because all my energy has gone into working out what the words actually were. I haven't grasped the story behind them.'* (pg.73)**

Write about a time when you have had to overcome an obstacle or had to work through something you have found difficult.

- It is alright to be different from other people? Discuss

***'Everyone has different strengths, Daniel...You'll find your strength.'* (pg. 50)**

Everyone is unique and different. Celebrate differences by making a list of your personal strengths.

- ***'Me? I'm not extraordinary I'm dyslexic.'***

***'Listen to me, Daniel.' Mr Samuels is looking at me with wise eyes. 'Dyslexics have a gift. A different way of doing things and looking at the world. Never forget that you have that gift too. Dyslexics are extraordinary people.'* (pg. 131)**

The main character Daniel Margate is neurodiverse. This can be seen as a superpower. Discuss.

Find examples in the text where Daniel's dyslexia has helped him to succeed.

Research and find out about individuals with dyslexia who have made great achievements in life.

- ***'I realise that I no longer wish I was Red Pollard. I am glad to be me, Daniel Margate.'* (pg.339)**

Daniel has been on a journey of self discovery. What has he learned about himself from this experience and those around him? How will this help him in the future?

- ***'I can't accept this trophy. I really can't. Shouldn't the journey that has been taken to achieve something be taken into account?'* (pg. 326)** What does this tell us about Melody?

All the characters in the book have gone on a personal journey. What can we learn from Daniel and the other characters in the book? What do they learn about themselves?

Theme: Determination/Courage

- ***'It's easy to keep doing things you are good at. It takes courage to do the things that you find hard. Remember that'* (pg. 200)**

Discuss the role of the teachers in the story. How do they support Daniel and the other characters?

Daniel shows courage and determination throughout the story - find examples within the text to prove this statement.

- If you really want something you should keep on trying? Discuss the importance of a 'Growth Mindset'.

Throughout the book Daniel and his friends move from a 'Fixed Mindset' to a 'Growth Mindset' to overcome the challenges they face in their everyday lives.

What is the difference between a 'Fixed Mindset' and a 'Growth Mindset'?

How can developing a 'Growth Mindset' help you to overcome challenges?

Can you find examples within the story where Daniel and his friends demonstrate having a 'fixed' or 'growth' mindset?

- Has there been a time when you have shown courage and determination to succeed?

Theme: Hope

- Why is it important to have hope? Discuss

- ***Cuthbert H. Brown Junior's pa, Cuthbert H. Brown Senior - who was my great-great-great-grandfather - lifted him high on to his shoulders to watch Seabiscuit win in the most exciting race ever and the crowd went wild and their hearts felt mended again and they had hope.'* (pg. 2-3)**

How do Daniels's great-great-grandad's letters to Seabiscuit provide the main character with hope? Find examples and provide quotes from the book to support your answer.

As the story develops the letters and tales of Seabiscuit and Cuthbert also give the other characters hope? Find examples and provide quotes from the book to support your answer.

- Jammie Dodger is also a symbol of hope for the characters in the book.

They decide not to tell anyone about the horse until the event.

Do you think this is the right decision? What do you think Daniel should have done in his situation? Should he have told an adult about Jammie Dodger or was he right to keep the horse a secret with his friends?

Conscience Alley: divide the class in two. Half the class to support one point of view while the other half the opposing point of view. Then split the class in to two facing rows, making a central alley. Pupils on both sides take it in turns to voice their thoughts and opinions. Review and then make an informed decision of what the character should do in this situation. Does everyone agree? Discuss further.

Theme: Friendship and Belonging

- Discuss the characteristics of a good friend.
- ***‘Over here Daniel,’ yells Akin, and his shout warms me. It’s like I belong, ‘cause no one usually picks me.’ (pg.91)***

‘It’s good having friends. Things are looking up.’ (pg. 135)

‘Life feels different after that very first meeting of the Secret Horse Society. I think we all felt it. We belong together.’ (pg.175)

The author makes several references to friendship and a sense of belonging.

How is friendship important to each of the individuals?

How does the author show that the characters belong within a community? (*consider the Beckham Estate, family, school, reading club, wider community, Secret Horse Society, Cinder Street Boyz, Beckham Animal Rescue Centre etc*)

Theme: Prejudice

- Daniel is treated differently by the ‘Cinder Street Boyz’ for his dyslexia.
 - How could Nico, Sol and Baz have behaved differently towards Daniel?
 - How do the actions and words of others affect Daniel?
- Other people’s perceptions and opinions matter to Daniel. Do you agree? Find examples from the text to support your judgement.
- Discuss how the author explores and challenges stereotypes.
- Discuss the impact of words used in everyday life. How can they be used in a positive and negative way?

Theme: Change

- Do experiences change people? Discuss
- How does the Big Race and Big Read change Daniel’s life forever?
- ***‘Thank you for changing my life, Daniel.’ (pg.339)***
 - Daniel’s attributes have changed his own life and those around him. Find evidence from the text to support this statement.
- How has life changed since the time of the ‘Great Depression’ in 1930s America?